

PROCEEDINGS OF THE HISTORIC CONSERVATION BOARD

MONDAY, JUNE 25, 2001

3:00 P.M., J. MARTIN GRIESEL ROOM, CENTENNIAL PLAZA II

The Historic Conservation Board met at 3:00 P.M., in the J. Martin Griesel Room, Centennial Plaza II. Members present: Borys, Dale, Kreider, Raser, Senhauser, Sullebarger and Wallace; members absent: Bloomfield and Spraul-Schmidt.

MINUTES

The minutes of May 21, 2001 were approved as amended (motion by Raser second by Borys.) The minutes of June 11, 2001 were approved as amended (motion by Borys second by Raser).

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 545 TUSCULUM AVENUE, COLUMBIA TUSCULUM HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Daniel Young summarized the staff report on the proposal by Camden Homes to purchase 545 Tusculum (and the adjoining property outside the historic district) and to demolish this contributing building at the northern edge of the district. The City's Department of Buildings and Inspections (B&I) has declared the building a public nuisance and stated it should be razed.

The applicant has submitted documentation supporting the claim that the foundation and structure are failing and that it is economically infeasible to rehabilitate the structure. Given the condition of the structure and rehabilitation costs, staff believes demolition of this building is appropriate. Mr. Young said that in a similar situation in 1991, the HCB approved demolition of a building at 3724 Sachem Avenue.

The Columbia Tusculum Community Council has not opposed the demolition but is adamant that there be community input into the design of any new building for this site. Camden Homes is aware of its obligation to obtain HCB approval for any new construction on this lot. Mr. Shahab Ileslamlou, the present owner of 545 Tusculum Avenue, and Mr. R. A. (Dutch) Cambruzzi, President/CEO of Camden Homes were present.

In response to a question from Mr. Kreider, Mr. Young said the decision by B&I to place a building on the Condemned Buildings List (as 545 Tusculum was on June 1) is triggered by citizen complaints and recommendations from building inspectors, followed by a public hearing of which surrounding property owners and other interested parties are informed.

Mr. Cambruzzi said the engineering reports have declared the building in grave condition and that he is aware of the need for both HCB and community approval for

any construction on the site. He said the average price for a home on that street is \$136,000; Camden Homes has offered \$120,000 for the land alone.

Mr. Cambruzzi submitted two alternative front elevations for a single family residence that could be built on the site. He said that the drawings were not specific proposals but preliminary studies intended to spark comments from the Board. Mr. Cambruzzi said he is seeking HCB input so he will have an idea of what the Board expects.

Mr. Senhauser emphasized that the HCB does not want to design the building and suggested two approaches:

1. Presentation to the HCB as a preliminary review when plans and elevations are developed in conformance with the historic district guidelines and in consultation with HCO staff or
2. Committee review when the HCB takes preliminary plans and elevations under advisement, then appoints a committee of the Board to work with the applicant, the Urban Conservator and HCO staff to devise appropriate plans.

Mr. Cambruzzi was commended for his selection of the Queen Anne style and the research for and detail of his preliminary elevation. Comments from the Board included:

1. A request for a footprint of the proposed building
2. Any new construction should reinforce the character of the street or neighborhood such as scale, materials, rhythm of openings, massing, detail, and might include rooflines that join disparate parts, porches that give smaller domestic scale for entry
3. Any design should address the site, the use of outdoor spaces and the space between buildings
4. The need to downplay the garage by placing it as a detached structure in the side or rear yard or in the basement of the house, or other alternatives that would eliminate the street-facing garage doors. The HCB and staff will work with the architect to suggest alternatives for a satisfactory design solution for the garage.
5. General massing to produce a more vertical building, taller than it is wide, more in keeping with other houses in the neighborhood

In response to Ms. Sullebarger's question about his construction schedule, Mr. Cambruzzi said the demolition of 545 Tusculum (and the other on the adjoining lot to the north that is not in the historic district but is in the environmental quality zone) can be done promptly; construction of the two new homes will be undertaken as soon as possible, but may require pre-sales.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Sullebarger second by Raser) to:

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the demolition of the building at 545 Tusculum Avenue in the Columbia Tusculum Historic District, finding that the structure cannot be reused nor can a reasonable economic return be gained from the use of all or part of the building.

2. Recommend that the applicant present plans for new construction to the Columbia Tuscolum Community Council for review and comment prior to applying for approval under the historic and environmental quality district guidelines.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 1420 SYCAMORE STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT

Mr. Young summarized the staff report recommending approval of this application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for an arbor attached to the building and over an existing patio at 1420 Sycamore Street. The Urban Conservator had previously approved plans for a freestanding arbor that would not be attached directly to the building. The contractor did not adhere to the approved plans and constructed the arbor attached to the building, as originally proposed (but not approved).

Mr. Young said an arbor is historically appropriate in Over-the-Rhine and, in this case, is well screened from the streets. It has been finished to blend in; hanging baskets are in place; vines have been planted to grow up and cover the arbor. It does not detract from the buildings in the district; it cuts across two openings that have been considerably altered and glazed with tinted glass.

Ms. Sullebarger abstained from consideration of this item.

In response to a question from Mr. Kreider, Mr. Young said the arbor was approved with support pillars next to the building, rather than attachment to the building; this would have interfered with table arrangements on the patio.

Mr. Senhauser explained that under the guidelines a freestanding arbor is considered a yard structure not subject to the same guidelines as a structure attached to the building and can be approved at the staff level; a structure attached to a building must have HCB approval.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted, with Ms. Sullebarger's abstention, (motion by Borys second by Wallace) to approve the staff recommendation for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a garden arbor at 1420 Sycamore Street in the Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS AND ZONING VARIANCE, 2026 COLERAIN AVENUE, DAYTON STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

Staff member Adrienne Cowden summarized this application for the HCB. The applicant wishes to replace an existing 5' tall chain link fence at 2026 Colerain Avenue with a 7' wrought iron fence, within Area C of the Dayton Street Historic District where district guidelines do not provide for the review of fences. The application does, however, require a zoning variance since the fence exceeds 6' in height. Ms. Cowden said the applicant, Mr. Watkins, was aware that he would not need a variance if he reduced the fence height to 6', but Mr. Watkins felt a 6' fence would be insufficient to secure his property. Ms. Cowden said staff considers the proposed wrought iron fence, despite its

height, to be a distinct improvement over the existing chain link fence; therefore, staff recommended approval of the fence.

A pre-hearing conference was held on June 19, 2001. Only the applicant, Mr. Watkins, attended the meeting. Mr. Watkins was also in attendance at the HCB meeting on June 25, 2001. Staff has received no comments or inquiries about the application.

In reply to a question from Mr. Kreider, Ms. Cowden stated that the Bank Street sidewalk is approximately 8' wide. Mr. Kreider further emphasized that 2026 Colerain Avenue occupies a corner lot on a major thoroughfare; he said this justifies in part approval of the height variance.

BOARD ACTION

The Board voted unanimously (motion by Raser second by Wallace) to grant approval of a height variance to allow the installation of a 7' tall iron fence at 2026 Colerain Avenue as illustrated in the specifications attached to the staff report, finding that such relief:

- A. Is necessary and appropriate in the interest of historic conservation so as not to adversely affect the historic, architectural or aesthetic integrity; and
- C. Will not be materially detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare or injurious to the property in the district or vicinity where the property is located.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS, 1120 MAIN STREET, OVER-THE-RHINE (SOUTH) HISTORIC DISTRICT

Ms. Cowden showed photographs of 1120 Main Street and summarized the staff report. BAR Cincinnati occupies the first floor of this building; access to Howl at the Moon on the second floor is through an entrance at the southernmost corner of the building. Accent Signs and Graphics has applied for a permit to mount a 2'-8" x 4'-0" projecting foam board sign for Howl at the Moon. The sign will be hung on a scroll bracket and installed on the second story between the two southernmost windows. Graphics will be black, red-orange and green against a white background. The bottom of the sign will be 22'-0" above the sidewalk and will extend approximately 3'-2" over the 12'-6" wide sidewalk.

Ms. Cowden said staff considers the placement of the sign so high on the two-story building inappropriate and had recommended the applicant consider two alternatives:

1. Install a cloth awning with Howl at the Moon logos above the storefront entrance, or
2. Install the proposed sign at a more appropriate level above the storefront entrance. The applicant preferred a projecting sign to an awning and indicated that the sign would be more visible to patrons if installed on the second story. The applicant argued that mounting the sign lower could also block the view of the existing BAR Cincinnati sign.

Ms. Julie Wentzel, representing Accent Signs & Graphics attended a pre-hearing conference on June 19, 2001. Bobbi Ebberts, from Santen & Hughes requested further

information about the sign for the building owners, C. Gregory Schmidt, Esq., trustee, and Bertram L. Davis, trustee. A letter of support from Mr. Schmidt, copied to Mr. Davis, is included in the staff report. Staff received no other comments or inquiries about the application.

BOARD ACTION

After discussion, the Board voted unanimously (motion by Sullebarger second by Borys) to accept the staff recommendation to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed sign as illustrated in the specifications attached to the staff report with the following conditions:

- A. The sign should be centered above the storefront entrance to Howl at the Moon in the existing recessed brick panel; and
- B. Final specifications for the sign hardware should be submitted to the Urban Conservator for approval prior to installation.

OTHER BUSINESS

Survey of signs on Main Street:

In response to Mr. Raser's request, Mr. Forwood said the HCO staff can help determine which signs on Main Street have been installed without permits or COAs. Mr. Young said he thinks approval has been sought and received for the majority of the existing signs.

Applications for installation of security devices: Mr. Forwood reported that since April, several building owners have inquired about installing roll-down security gates or blocking up their commercial storefronts in the Over-the-Rhine (South) Historic District. Mr. Senhauser said the HCB has discouraged installation of these devices in the past because they become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Ms. Borys reminded the Board that such devices are quite common in Europe.

ADJOURNMENT

As there were no other items for consideration by the Board, the meeting adjourned (motion by Dale second by Sullebarger).

William L. Forwood
Urban Conservator

John C. Senhauser
Chairman

Date